

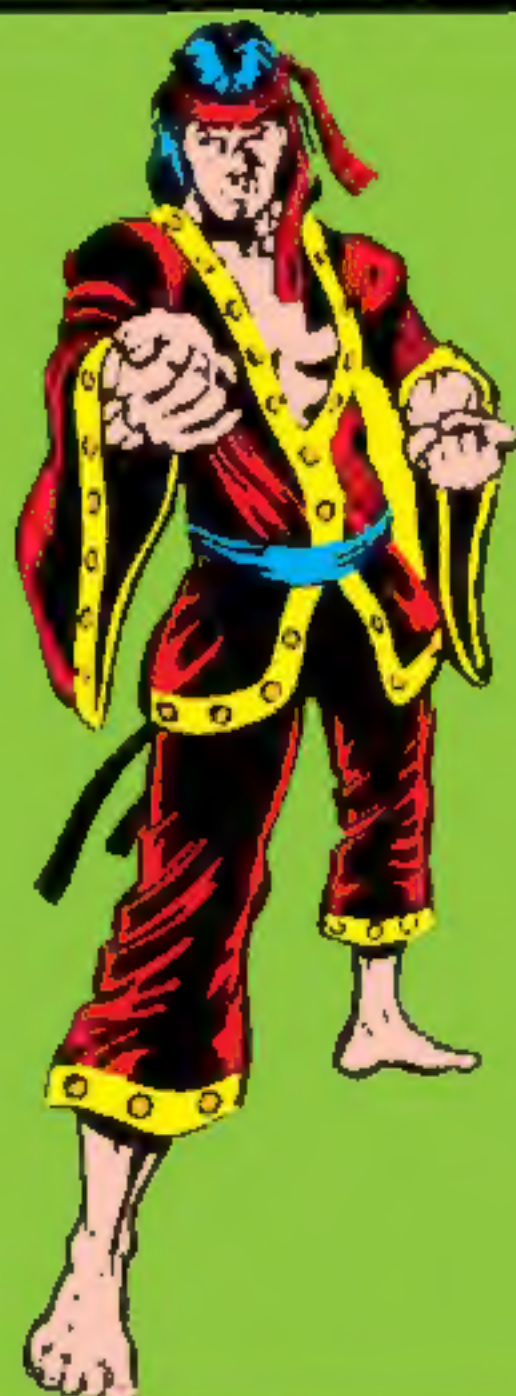
MASTER OF
KUNG FU

54
JULY
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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU

**DEATH WEARS
THREE FACES!**



**A STARTLING
NEW DIRECTION
IN THE WORLD'S
FOREMOST
MARTIAL ARTS
ACTION SERIES!**

STARLIN

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my *father* did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to *honor* him would bring nothing but *dishonor* to the spirit of my *name*.

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!™

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

THE STORY OF WAR-YORE



"I HAVE CHOSEN TO
LEAVE THE PAST OF
SMITH'S AGENCY,
AND THE OTHERS
HAVE FOLLOWED ME
INTO A NEW
FUTURE..."

"...BUT I FEAR
TOO MANY SEEDS
HAVE ALREADY
BEEN PLANTED,
SOME YET TO
MATURE... FOR
THE CHOICE TO
MATTER."

DOUG MOENCH /
STORY

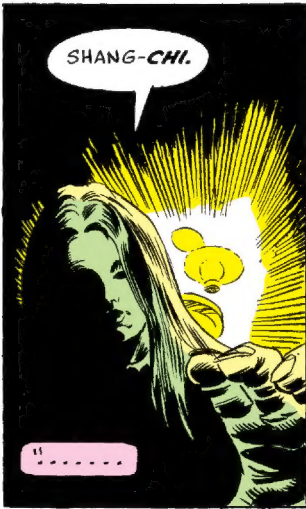
JIM CRAIG /
ART

JOHN TARTAG /
INKS

JOE ROSEN /
LETTERS

PHIL RACHE /
COLORS

A. GOODWIN /
EDITOR



SHANG-CHI.



WAKE UP. YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?

IT'S LATE.

"...? LEIKO.



COME ON, I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN MISSING A LOT OF SLEEP LATELY--

--BUT RIP VAN WINKLE DOESN'T SUIT YOU.



WHAT... TIME... IS IT?

NOON.

TIME FOR ME TO BE OFF FOR SOME EATS.

"THE CAT STILL SLEEPS."



EATS?

FOOD-- GROCERIES. I'M GOING TO THE MARKET NOW.



I SHOULDN'T BE LONG, SHANG. YOU CAN PASS THE TIME GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH MY TASTES IN MUSIC. THE SOUND SYSTEM'S NOT BAD.

"SHE IS TRYING TO BE CHEERFUL, AVOIDING MENTION OF THE NEW PATH... AND ESPECIALLY THE UNKNOWN DESTINATION. GOOD. FOR NOW.



"THE DOOR CLICKS, AND I SELECT ONE FROM MANY-- BY CHANCE, IT IS REFRESHING TO BE FREE OF BIAS, EVEN THOUGH IGNORANCE IS THE SOLE LIBERATOR.

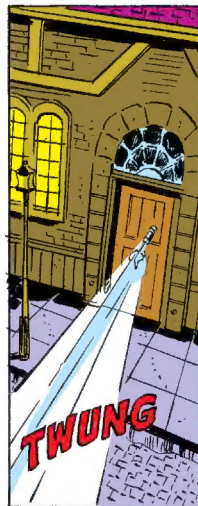
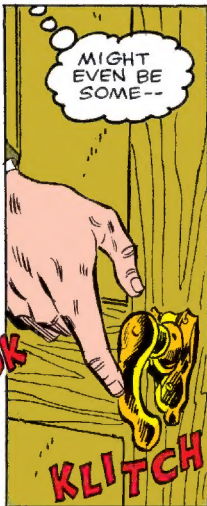
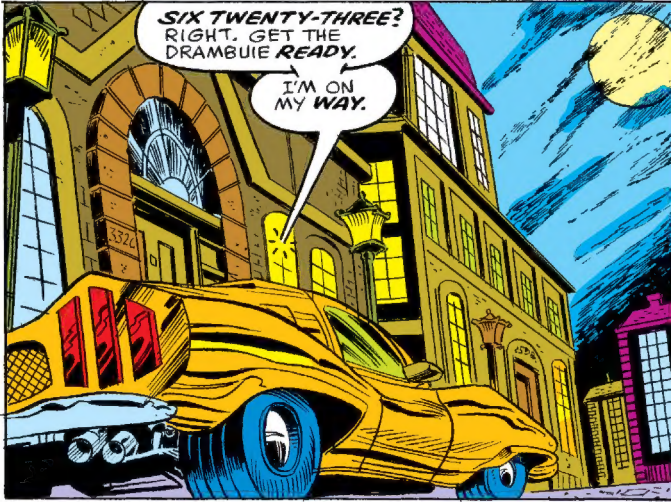
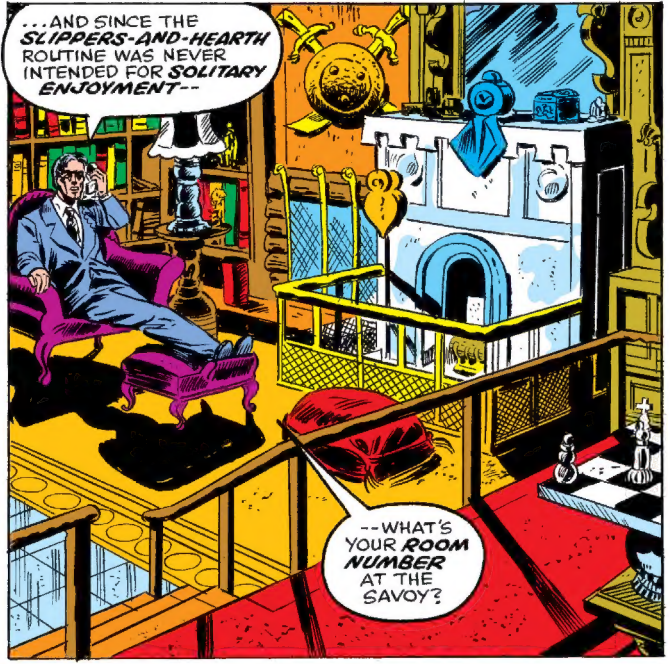


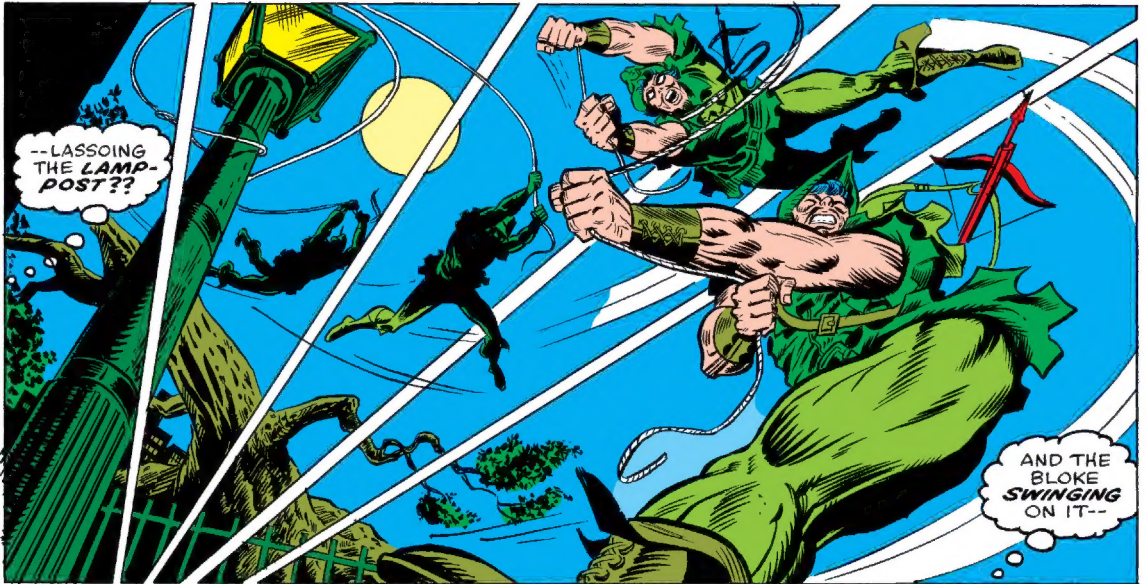
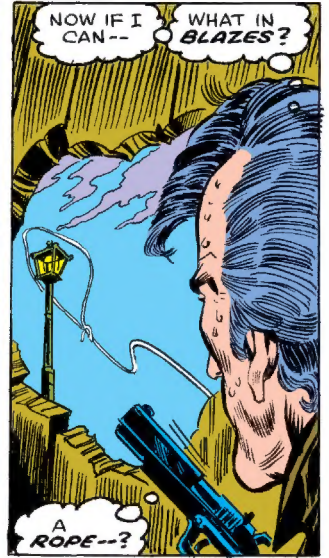
YEAH, I WAS LIVIN' PRETTY MUCH OUT OF MY OFFICE AT MI-6 SO I'VE HAD TO LEASE A ROOM HERE AT THE SAVOY.

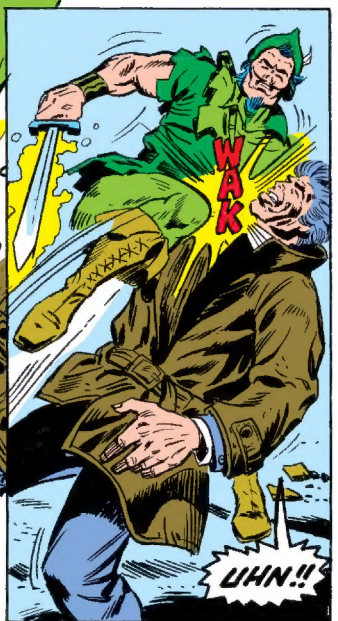
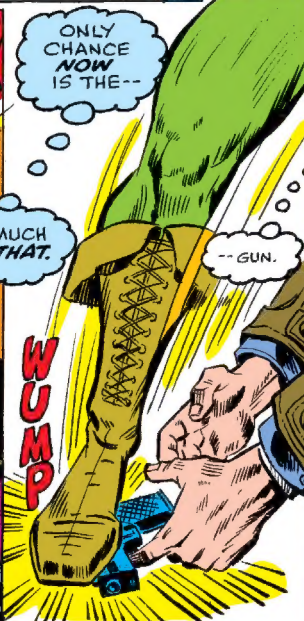


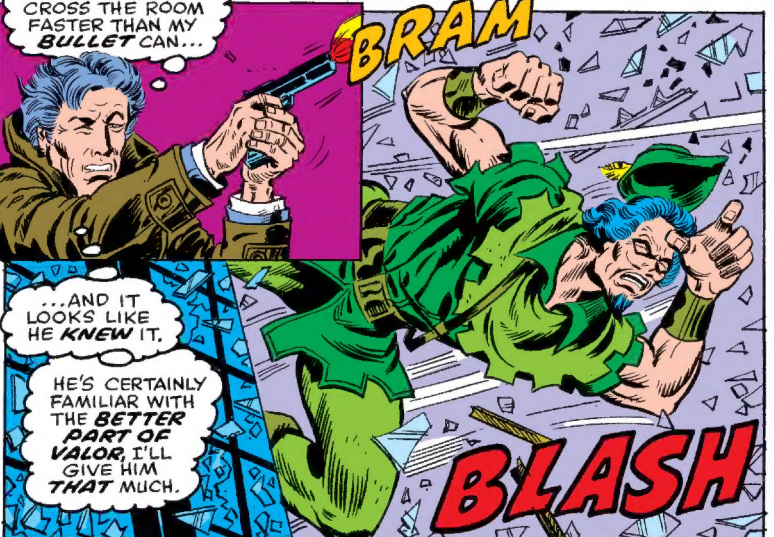
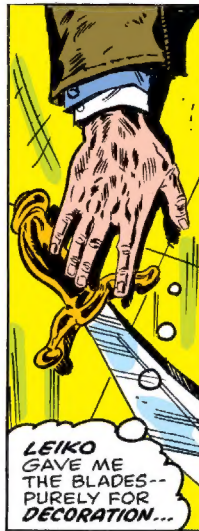
YEAH. WELL A ROOM'S A ROOM. WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A BREAK FROM 332-C BUTCHER PLACE AND POP OVER FOR A DRINK?

WE CAN TELL EACH OTHER HOW OLD AND YOUNG SOLDIERS NEVER DIE... THEY JUST GO BALMY WITH BOREDOM.







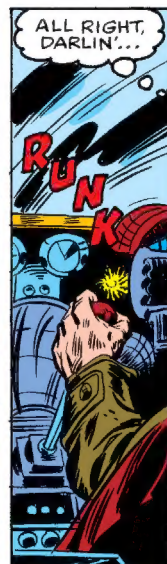




BUT I'LL BE A
SPECTRE'S UNCLE
IF I'LL GIVE HIM--



-- A CHANCE
TO **ESCAPE**.



ALL RIGHT,
DARLIN'...



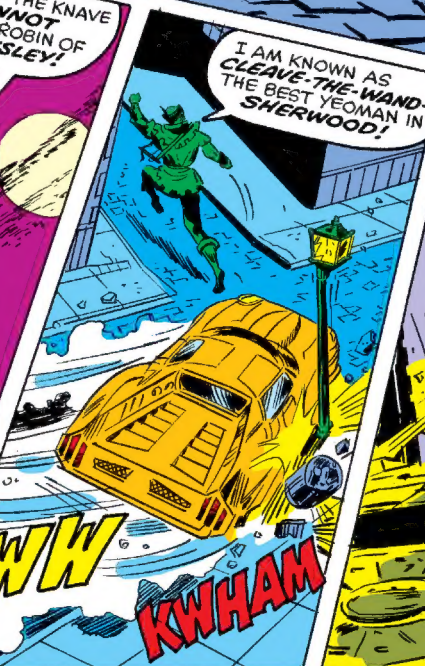
...**MOVE!**



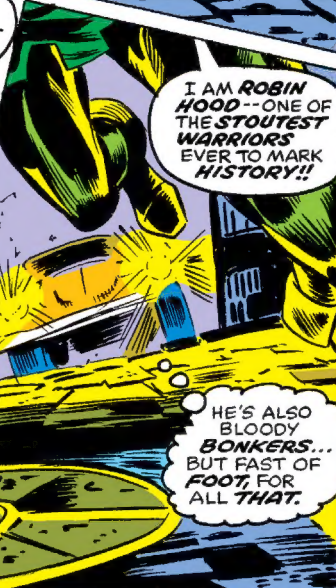
SKREEEE



NO-- THE KNAVE
CANNOT
BEST ROBIN OF
LOCKSLEY!



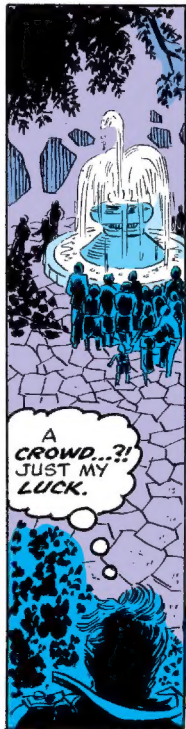
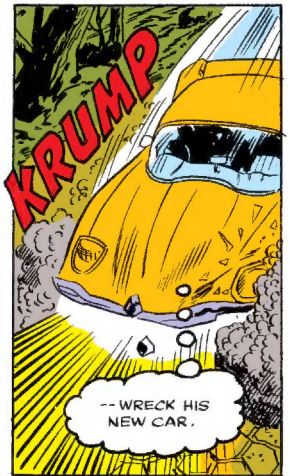
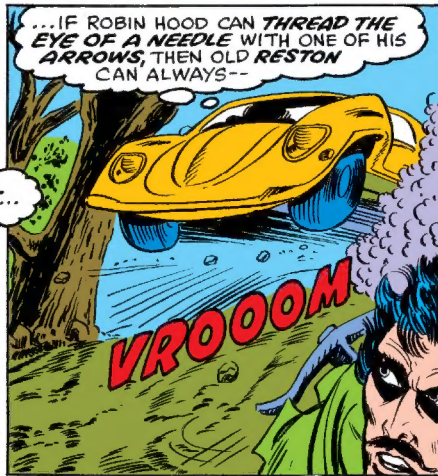
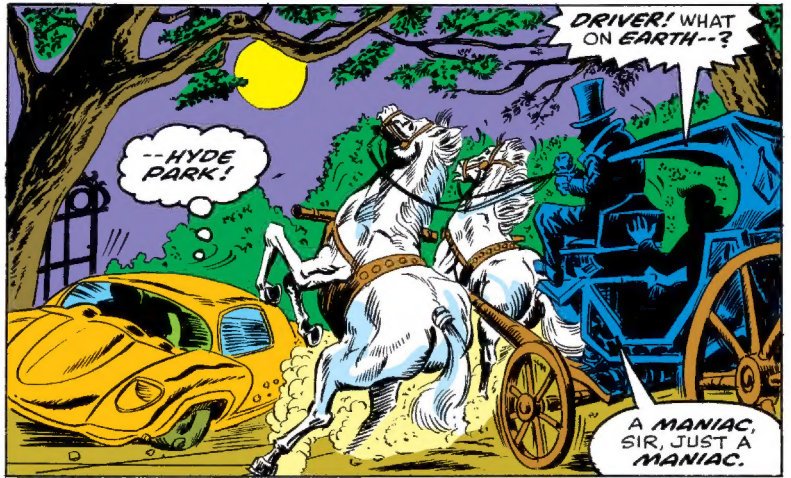
I AM KNOWN AS
CLEAVE-THE-WAND--
THE BEST YEOMAN IN
SHERWOOD!

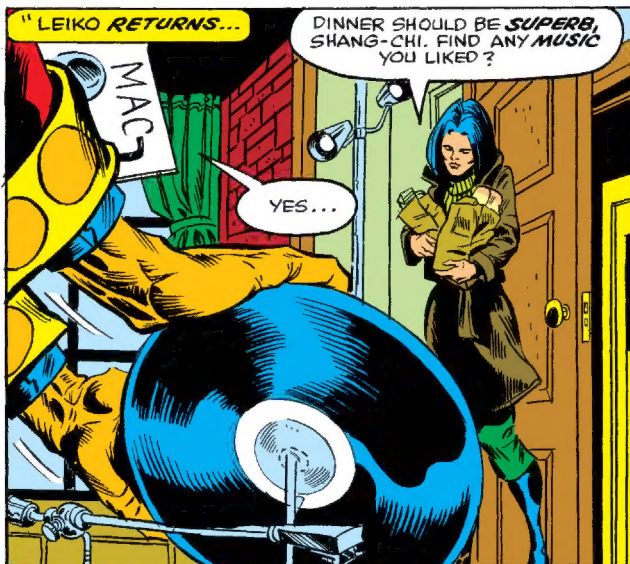


I AM ROBIN
HOOD-- ONE OF
THE **STOUTEST**
WARRIORS
EVER TO MARK
HISTORY!!

HE'S ALSO
BLOODY
BONKERS...
BUT FAST OF
FOOT, FOR
ALL THAT.

VRAOWW
KWHAM

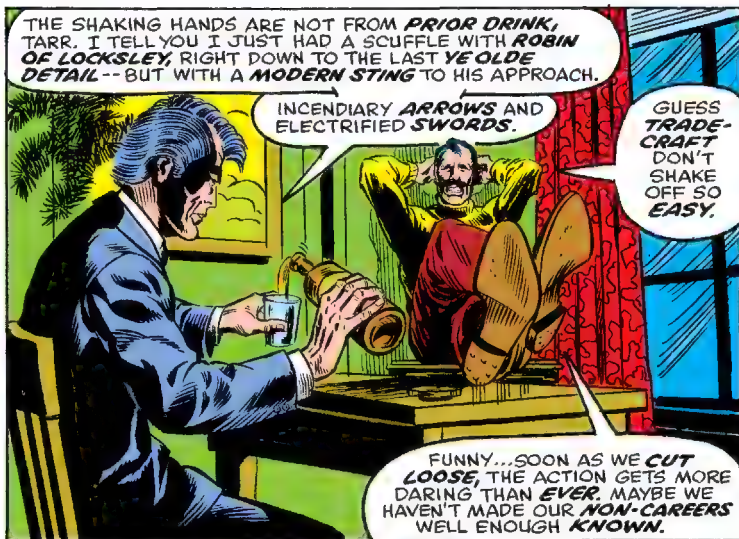






ROBIN HOOD--?!

YOU WERE S'POSED TO WAIT 'TIL YOU GOT HERE BEFORE CRACKIN' THE BOTTLE, RESTON.

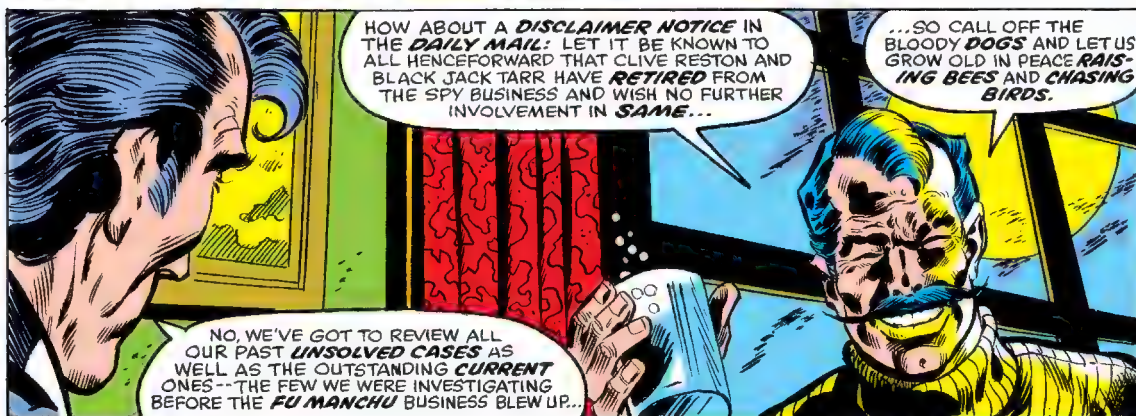


THE SHAKING HANDS ARE NOT FROM *PRIOR DRINK*, TARR. I TELL YOU I JUST HAD A SCUFFLE WITH *ROBIN OF LOCKSLEY*, RIGHT DOWN TO THE LAST YE OLDE *DETAIL*--BUT WITH A *MODERN STING* TO HIS APPROACH.

INCENDIARY *ARROWS* AND ELECTRIFIED *SWORDS*.

GUESS *TRADE-CRAFT* DON'T SHAKE OFF SO *EASY*.

FUNNY...SOON AS WE *CUT LOOSE*, THE ACTION GETS MORE DARING THAN *EVER*. MAYBE WE HAVEN'T MADE OUR *NON-CAREERS* WELL ENOUGH *KNOWN*.



HOW ABOUT A *DISCLAIMER NOTICE* IN THE *DAILY MAIL*: LET IT BE KNOWN TO ALL HENCEFORWARD THAT CLIVE RESTON AND BLACK JACK TARR HAVE *RETIRED* FROM THE SPY BUSINESS AND WISH NO FURTHER INVOLVEMENT IN *SAME*...

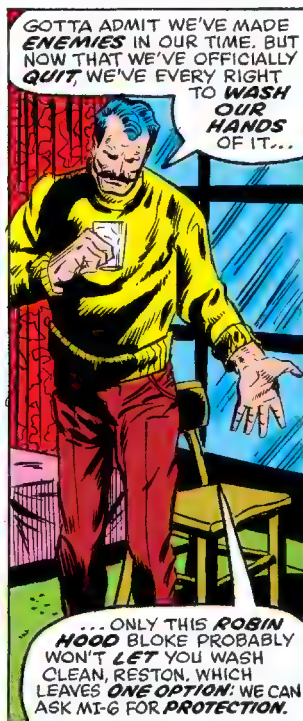
...SO CALL OFF THE BLOODY *DOGS* AND LET US GROW OLD IN PEACE *RAISING BEES* AND *CHASING BIRDS*.

NO, WE'VE GOT TO REVIEW ALL OUR PAST *UNSOLVED CASES* AS WELL AS THE OUTSTANDING *CURRENT* ONES--THE FEW WE WERE INVESTIGATING BEFORE THE *FU MANCHU* BUSINESS BLEW UP...



THEN AGAIN, IT *COULD* BE SOMEONE WITH A TASTE FOR REVENGE OUT OF THE *CLOSED* FILES...

...SOMEONE WHO'S *SLIPPED FREE* OF THE *BAR*S, OR A *FRIEND* OF SOMEONE WHO'S STILL *BEHIND* *BAR*S--OR *SIX FEET UNDER* WITH ONE OF MY *BULLETS* IN HIS BELLY.



GOTTA ADMIT WE'VE MADE *ENEMIES* IN OUR TIME. BUT NOW THAT WE'VE OFFICIALLY *QUIT*, WE'VE EVERY RIGHT TO *WASH OUR HANDS* OF IT...

...ONLY THIS *ROBIN HOOD* BLOKE PROBABLY WON'T LET YOU WASH CLEAN, RESTON, WHICH LEAVES *ONE OPTION*: WE CAN ASK MI-6 FOR *PROTECTION*.



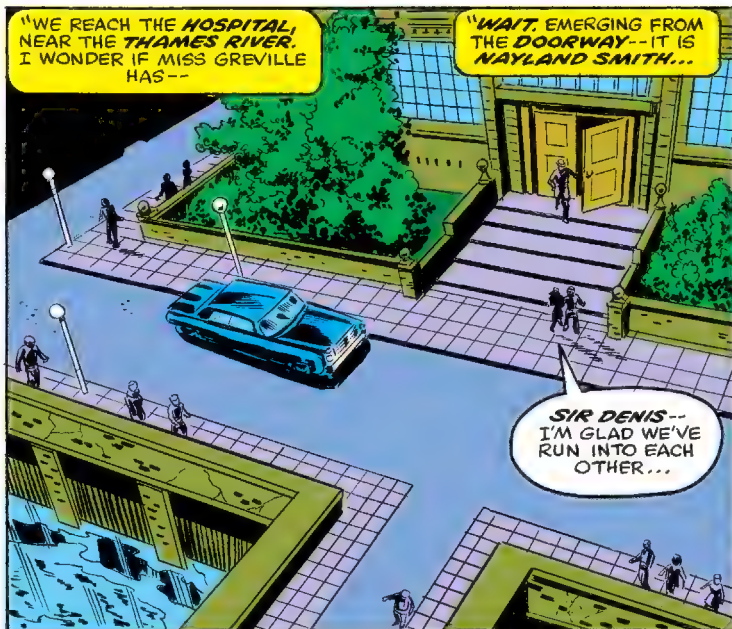
ALL RIGHT, TARR, YOU'VE *MADE* YOUR POINT.

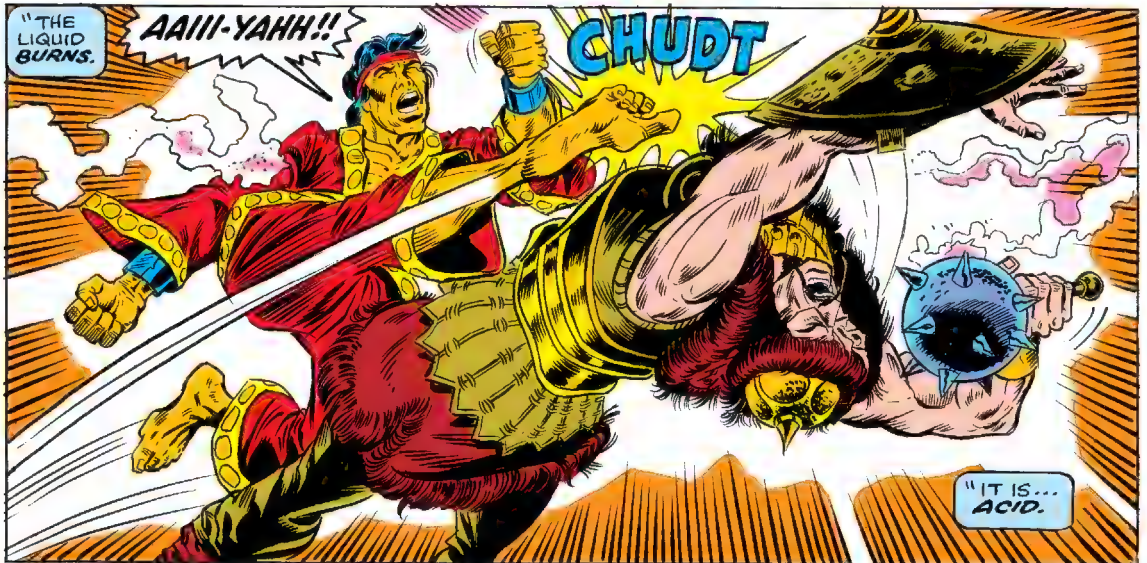
WE'RE THE BEST AGENTS MI-6 HAD AND YOU *KNOW* IT. SO *WHO* BABY-SITS THE *BABY-SITTER*?



WE DO. FIRST STOP: *SOHO*.

IF IT'S SOMEONE *RECENT*, WU AND THE *CHINAMAN* COULD BE TARGETS *AS WELL*.







LEIKO, THERE IS NO NEED FOR *YOU* TO--

THERE *IS*, SHANG. AND THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO ARGUE ROLES.



I AM *ATTILA THE HUN*-- EXALTED MESSENGER OF YOUR *DEATHS*!



PERHAPS... YOU ARE *RIGHT*.

"HE BACKS *AWAY* FROM US, ONTO THE *BRIDGE*, NOT IN *RETREAT*-- BUT WITH THE WISDOM OF A *WARRIOR'S INSTINCT*. HE SEEKS TO LIMIT THE *AVENUES OF ATTACK* TO *ONE*, THUS PROTECTING HIS *BACK*."



FACE ME, FACE *DEATH*.

"WE EMPLOY THE SINGLE AVENUE OPEN TO US."



KIYAAH!!

"WE *ATTACK*."

"HE GREET'S US WITH A FURY BORN OF *MADNESS*, BUT DISCIPLINED BY *SKILL*-- AND EXTENDED IN HIS *MACE*..."



"I FALL INTO A *CROUCH*, *SPINNING*--"

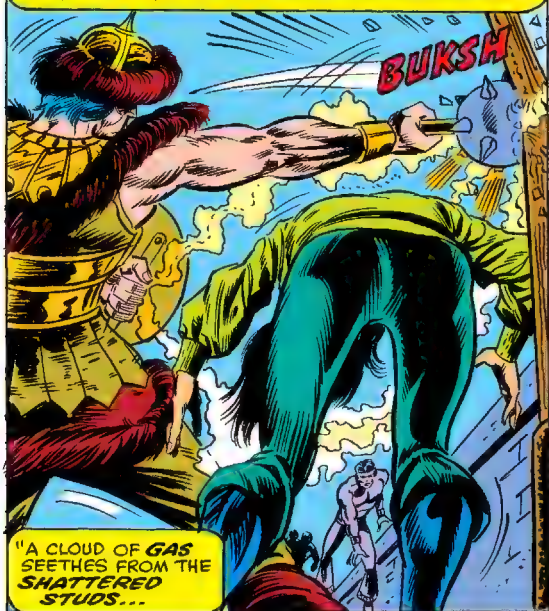
"--TO RISE AND STRIKE FROM *BEHIND*..."



WAK

"...AS A SPLIT-MOMENT LATER, DOES *LEIKO*."

"SHE EVADES HIS **SECOND** SWING, NOW... BUT **THIS** TIME, PERHAPS, THE MACE FINDS ITS **TRUE** TARGET.



"A CLOUD OF **GAS** SEETHES FROM THE **SHATTERED** STUDS...

"AND LEIKO FALLS **INSIDE** THAT CLOUD.



UHHH...



"BUT IS SHE MERELY **UN-CONSCIOUS**...?"

"OR IS SHE...?"

HE'S **LATE**. I DON'T **LIKE** IT, I TELL YOU, WHEN WAS HE **DUE**?

OH, ABOUT A **QUARTER-HOUR** AGO, WHICH MEANS--



--IT'S TIME TO OPEN THE **DOOR** AND LET HIM **IN**.



WHAT AN ORDEAL **FINDING** THIS PLACE. SAFE HOUSES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE **REMOTE**; GOD KNOWS, BUT THIS IS ABSOLUTELY **RIDICULOUS**.



WELL, GET **ON** WITH IT. WHAT **STEPS** HAVE YOU TAKEN? I HAVEN'T GOT **ALL DAY**.

YES, SIR.

WE'VE DECIDED TO USE A **SURROGATE**, SIR-- A **FREE AGENT** MORE OR LESS-- BUT SERVING WITHOUT **PAY**. INDEED, THE SATISFACTION OF THE WORK ITSELF IS **REWARD ENOUGH** FOR THIS INDIVIDUAL...



ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT'S **WISE**? BRINGING IN AN **OUTSIDE PARTY**? AN **UNKNOWN FACTOR**?

...SO THERE'LL BE NO PROBLEMS WITH **TREASURY**.

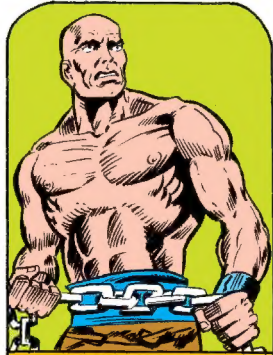
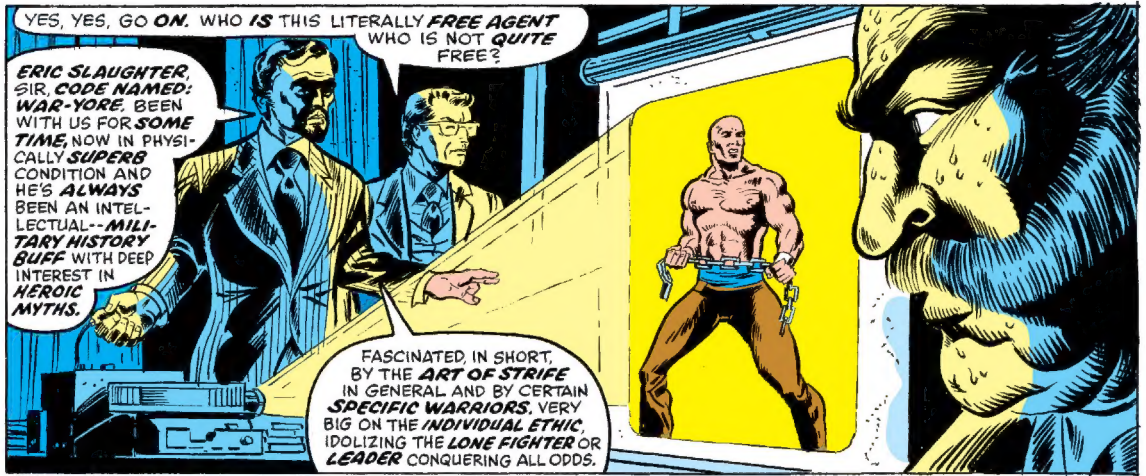
OH, HE'S NOT **QUITE** FROM THE OUTSIDE, SIR, BUT NEITHER IS HE IN A POSITION OR CONDITION TO JEOPARDIZE US FROM THE **IN-SIDE**. BESIDES, WE DECIDED THAT OUR **DIRECT INVOLVEMENT** NOT TO MENTION **YOURS**, WOULD BE **LESS WISE**.



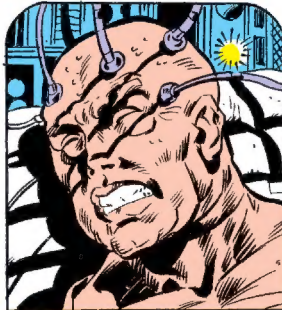
THE METHODICAL **ASSASSINATION** OF FOUR PRIME **BRITISH AGENTS** WILL NOT BE TAKEN **LIGHTLY**--



--AS YOU WELL **KNOW**, SIR.



BUT UNTIL **RECENTLY**, HE HIMSELF WAS VERY **TIMID**-- A DOWDY **OFFICE-WORKER** TYPE, **OVERWEIGHT, NON-VIOLENT**, AND THUS DEEMED A **PRIME SUBJECT** FOR OUR EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM TO PRODUCE--



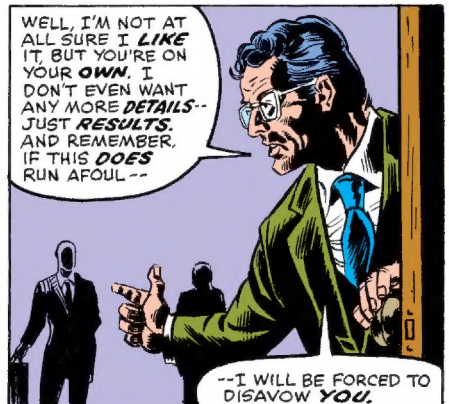
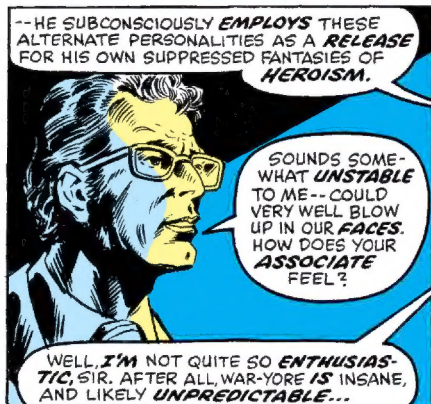
--THE **PERFECT OPTIMUM-DANGER OPERATIVE**. BUT HE THEN EMBARKED ON **INDEPENDENT PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH**, AS WELL AS **RIGOROUS PHYSICAL TRAINING**. OUR, AH, **BRAINWASHING** MAY HAVE ALREADY NUDGED HIM OVER THE **EDGE**.



INDEED, IN KEEPING WITH HIS **INTERESTS**, HE **SCHIZOPHRENICALLY** ADOPTED THE **GUISES** OF VARIOUS **HISTORICAL PERSONAGES**-- ALL **WARRIORS** FROM THE "**DAYS OF YORE**" HENCE HIS **CODE-NAME**.



BUT EACH PERSONA IS SUPPLEMENTED BY **ADVANCED WEAPONRY TECHNIQUES**-- A **LASER-LANCE** FOR EXAMPLE SUGGESTING THAT HE IS NOT **COMPLETELY** LOST IN THE PAST. IT HAS BEEN **SPECULATED** THAT--



"HE HAS LUNGED FROM *BEHIND*, HOPING MY *CONCERN* WOULD DROWN ALL *OTHER AWARENESS*. FAILING IN *THIS*, HE HAS NEVERTHELESS FORCED ME *AWAY* FROM LEIKO'S FORM..."

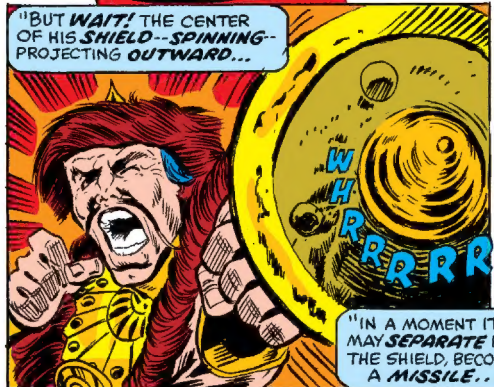
I DO NOT KNOW YOUR *TRUE NAME*, BUT IF YOU HAVE *INJURED THIS WOMAN*, I DO NOT CARE *WHO*--



"BUT WAIT! THE CENTER OF HIS *SHIELD*--*SPINNING*--PROJECTING *OUTWARD*..."

"EVADING IT WILL NOT BE *DIFFICULT*, BUT..."

"...*BEHIND ME*... *INNOCENT PEOPLE*..."



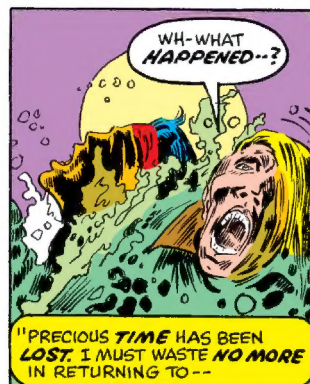
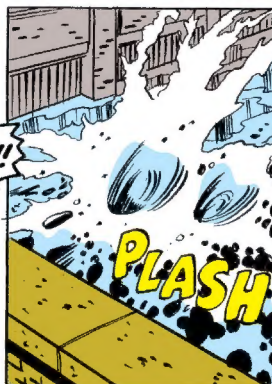
"IN A MOMENT IT MAY *SEPARATE* FROM THE *SHIELD*, BECOMING A *MISSILE*..."



"THE *MISSILE* WILL *PASS ON*...*STRIKING ONE OF THEM*!"



"THERE IS ONLY *ONE CHOICE*."



"PRECIOUS *TIME* HAS BEEN *LOST*. I MUST WASTE *NO MORE* IN RETURNING TO--



"--THE BRIDGE.

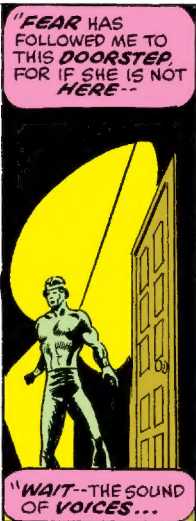
LEIKO...

WHERE IS...
LEIKO--?



"GONE...
VANISHED,
LIKE A
CAT INTO
DARKNESS..."

'AND WITH HER HAS GONE... ATTILA.



"FEAR HAS
FOLLOWED ME TO
THIS DOORSTEP,
FOR IF SHE IS NOT
HERE--"

"WAIT--THE SOUND
OF VOICES..."



"...INSIDE!"

KRAT
CH



TARR-- AND RESTON--! WHAT ARE
YOU... DOING HERE?

CAME LOOKIN' FOR YOU
AND WU. GOT BAD NEWS
FOR YA, AND IF YOU'LL
QUIT BUSTIN' DOWN
DOORS, WE'LL--

THEN LEIKO
IS NOT HERE...
AS I FEARED?



NO, OF
COURSE
SHE'S NOT
HERE, CHI.

DON'T YOU
KNOW WHERE
SHE IS--?

NO...



... BUT I KNOW WHAT HAS
HAPPENED TO HER. SHE HAS
BEEN ABDUCTED... OR SLAIN...
BY A MADMAN... CALLING
HIMSELF... ATTILA...

ATTILA--? THAT CAPS
IT, RESTON. WHETHER WE
LIKE IT OR NOT, WAR'S
JUST BEEN DECLARED
ON ALL OF US--

--BY THE MOST BIZARRE
ARMY EVER SPIT
OUTTA HISTORY.

"LEI...KO..."

**NEXT
ISSUE:** MORE ACTION, CONFLICT, TENSION, AND MYSTERY AS THE CONTINUING STORY
OF WAR-YORE SHIFTS INTO HIGH GEAR! IT'S ALL IN THE STUNNINGLY STRANGE
SECOND EPISODE, WHEN WE PONDER--
OF WARRIORS PAST AND BATTLES PRESENT!

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

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Due to an unprecedented volume of print-deserving mail (even for MASTER OF KUNG FU), we're gonna dispense with our usual individual replies this time and jump right into a miracle...

Dear Doug:

You were right. Issue #50 is pretty amazing, and completely different. You managed to create an extremely high level of character depth in Fu Manchu while maintaining the usual high standard in the other roles. Of course, I was still glad to see Fu Manchu's fade-out, but even with your build-up of promises I was surprised at the sensitive rendering.

The most significant panel is the confrontation in which Shang-Chi holds his sword to Fu Manchu's throat; this epitomizes the classic juxtaposition inherent in this book since its inception, and this fine six-part series seems to close the initial chapter of Shang-Chi's adult life. The solution by pistol instead of fist is a master touch, and reminds me of the Faulkner quote repeated so often by Harlan Ellison as one of his own guidelines, to the effect that nothing is worth writing about except "the human heart in conflict with itself." A fine prelude to a dignified ending.

Again, the portrayal of Fu Manchu was indeed sympathetic, the most unique rendering of any master villain since the origin of Doctor Doom, and you didn't sacrifice the characterization either. Doug, you caught me off-stride—an experience to which I'm not accustomed. Thank you for "The Dreamslayer."

To Paul: I'm extremely sorry to see you go. And in '73, I'd have gargled golfballs before admitting I might ever say *that*.

Bill Wu
101 N. Ingalls-8
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Missives to the Master:

Moench, you're brilliant. This current epic isn't being written; it's being woven with the intricacy of a delicate spider's web. It started way back in issue #39, where we received a glimpse of things to come through some torn-up documents floating on the water of a Hong Kong harbor. Then the story continued, with the readers still unknowing witnesses to the unfolding of a masterpiece, with the near deaths of two major characters and the unveiling of the "Mole" as Petrie.

Then we are finally launched into the anxiously awaited Fu Manchu epic—only to realize we've already been involved in it for *months*. I say again, Moench: You're brilliant. The character interactions have been superb; you've delved into the personalities and inner thoughts of every character in the cast—including Larner, who never even narrated his own issue. Which brings me to perhaps the most important point of the entire series: Larner's death. The sequence was excellent and innovative; Jennie was pictured as only a man delirious with love and grief could have seen her. The man's torment burned from the page. And in the second and third panels of page 31, Larner's appearance was truly startling. Excellent work, Gulacy. Keep it up.

Jeff Rogers
540 Linden St.
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Dear Doug and Paul,
My God!

Is there any chance of MASTER OF KUNG FU going *weekly*?

Mitch Paul
R.R. #1
Rockland, Ontario KOA 3A0

Dear Doug and Paul,

Perhaps the most worthwhile project undertaken by Marvel Comics in all of 1976 is the six-part epic that concluded in

MASTER OF KUNG FU #50. The book had become much more than your run-of-the-mill martial arts claptrap long before the beginning of this latest Fu Manchu saga, but once this splendid story got into high gear, it became the finest comic to be found anywhere.

Here's a title that's broken all the rules and made us like it. I don't know if anybody really noticed it or not, but there was virtually no strictly kung fu action in "The Dreamslayer." Time was when Doug Moench would've been hung from the highest yardarm in the Brooklyn Navy Yard for such blasphemy—but with all the tension, excitement, and other martial arts (i.e. samurai) action offered in #50, I doubt if anyone missed a few extra kicks and punches. I certainly didn't. Then, too, there are the unheard-of developments in the book's supporting cast. To wit: They all have personalities. They don't just stand around and react to the hero; they're heroes themselves. Now everyone *knows* that this just can't happen, that if it's attempted the personality of the hero will be diminished to the status of a secondary character in his own title. Sure. Just like the works of Shakespeare were actually written by a committee and the George Foreman/Muhammed Ali fight in Zaire was fixed.

And while I'm tossing bouquets, let's throw one in the direction of Paul Gulacy, whose artwork was just as important to this masterpiece as was Doug's prose. Powerful, dynamic, often shocking in its finely crafted details of violent encounters between opposing factions; all this (and considerably more) describes Paul's work. He is responsible not only for the cinematic flow that has highlighted each issue of MOKF for the last two years, but also for the raw beauty of visual life he's given to Doug's ideas.

What's next for the son of Fu Manchu? Only the future will tell. But if the past is any indication, it's definitely something to look forward to.

Ed Via
1648 Dean Road
Roanoke, Virginia 24018

Dear Doug,

The latest issue of my publication, COMIC MEDIA NEWS, contains the results of our annual awards poll. This time, I'm very pleased to say, you have been voted Best Comic Book Writer of 1976. On the behalf of everyone involved in the poll (including, I might add, many of Britain's best writers and artists) I'm sending you our heartiest congratulations. And on a personal note, I would like to thank you for providing me with some of the most entertaining and worthwhile reading in 1976. I look forward to more of the same in 1977.

Richard Burton
Editor & Publisher
COMIC MEDIA NEWS

Thanks, Richard, for letting us beam so brightly. And we've got to add that not only did Doug cop the Best Writer award, but none other than Peerless Paul Gulacy walked away with the Best Penciler of the Year award—and by an overwhelming majority of votes, no less. Furthermore, to make the sweep incredibly complete, MASTER OF KUNG FU (in a tie with CONAN) was democratically deemed the Best Adventure Book of the Year. We're deeply honored, to say the least, and we again thank Richard and his staff most sincerely. (Such good news deserves a plug, we say, so if you'd like to glom a truly fine fanzine, send an international money order in the amount of 2 pounds—for a five-issue subscription—to: Richard Burton, COMIC MEDIA NEWS, 22 Woodhaw, Egham, Surrey TW20 9AP, ENGLAND.)

Which leaves us only enough room for our customary closing of...be good.